

# CENTRAL

By Caroline Larson

## Growing Beyond Rural Expectations

To the untrained eye, Central Utah is a glimpse into the past. Here, away from the city, life appears to move at a slower pace. The six counties—Juab, Millard, Sevier, Sanpete, Piute and Wayne—that make up this region are predominantly rural and are home to some of Utah's most scenic views. A small-town feel is still preserved in its communities, and its rich history is not forgotten.

Many people traveling back and forth across Utah see the region's landscape from their car windows, missing the region's many beguiling attractions. Truckers take coal from this region to different areas of the West. Pipelines and power lines pass energy through Central Utah to other markets. On the surface, this region may appear to be nothing more than a thoroughfare, but if people could stop and see Central Utah while standing still, they would see an area booming with economic activity.

### ENERGY HUB

Central Utah is abuzz with energy activity. It is not only an energy thoroughfare and an energy source; it has also become an energy market. This region of Utah has billions of dollars invested into it because of its many existing, yet undiscovered, resources.

By purchasing the Kern River Pipeline system in 2002 and planning the purchase of PacifiCorp in 2006, Warren Buffet, one of the world's savviest businessmen, is investing over \$10 billion in energy assets. A number of these prime energy assets sit within Central Utah, including PacifiCorp's Currant Creek power plant. This \$350-million gas-fired plant is located in Juab County. A second phase of the plant will be completed in 2006. It is anticipated that this second phase will double the Currant Creek plant's size and increase its efficiency.

The Intermountain Power Project (IPP), located in Millard County, is the largest power plant in Utah. As of 2003, the investment in this plant, as represented by outstanding bonds, exceeds \$2.4 billion, and IPP has future plans

### FAST FACTS:

**Counties:** Juab, Millard, Sevier, Sanpete, Piute, Wayne

**Major Cities:** Richfield (7,048), Nephi (5,034), Ephraim (4,765), Delta (3,126)

**Regional Civilian Labor Force:** 29,842

**Per Capita Income:** \$17,348 (Juab), \$17,472 (Millard), \$18,046 (Sevier), \$14,786 (Sanpete), \$17,570 (Piute), \$19,226 (Wayne)

**Top Private-Sector Employers:** Moroni Feed, Canyon Fuels Company, Flying V Bar Ranch

**Average Sale Price of Homes, Third Quarter 2004:** Juab \$130,727

### SOURCES

Population: [www.city-data.com](http://www.city-data.com), EDCUTAH, various city Web sites

Labor Force & Income: EDCUTAH

Homes: Utah Association of Realtors

Employers: Same as last year, except SL and Utah Counties: provided by EDCUTAH

to increase its capacity by one third.

The most recent energy breakthrough to hit Central Utah is in the form of oil. In the spring of 2005, Wolverine Gas & Oil Corp of Michigan announced that after years of searching the area, it had struck black gold. The discovery was made in Sevier County in 2003, but the company managed to keep it secret until 2005. Now many oil companies have hurried to the region to acquire their own wells in Central Utah. It is widely suspected that oil will be plentiful in the area, and many companies want to cash in. Some estimates say that this region could hold more than 100 million barrels of oil. If these numbers are correct, Central Utah would be the site of the biggest onshore discovery in the past thirty years.

The huge amount of money flowing through this region because of its energy assets creates a ripple effect to all commercial activities.

### MANUFACTURING EXCELLENCE

A considerable amount of business interest in the Central region focuses on two companies located in the small

town of Fayette (population 204, according to recent statistics). The first is Applied Composites Technologies (ACT), a company that makes prosthetic and artificial limbs for athletic competition as well as for everyday use. ACT also manufactures laminated and molded aerospace as well as medical and military parts.

Christensen Arms develops carbon-barreled rifles, which have many advantages over steel barrels such as their strength, light weight and accuracy. Christensen Arms consistently garners national and international attention as a result of the many trophies bagged by its rifle's users, its weekly national hunting show on The Men's Channel and the hunting expeditions the company leads throughout the world. Both Applied Composites and Christensen Arms are at the forefront of an emerging and diversified regional economic environment.

### SMART SITES

Central Utah also focuses strongly on entrepreneurial development. The stated goal for the region's six

counties is to create and sustain small businesses. The state Smart Sites program is designed to decrease business costs and build rural economies by providing support to the companies in the region. This program enables local and national companies to outsource certain tasks, such as software design, Web site design, and Web marketing to centers in rural Utah. Through Internet and digital telecommunications, small companies are able to work with Smart Sites and receive a product for less money. Les Prall, a member of the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) Rural Development team, says Smart Sites allow Utah's rural communities to have all the technological savvy available in larger cities. "Through the Utah Smart Site Initiative, we have been able to partner with our smallest Utah communities and local entrepreneurs to create jobs using the latest IT technologies," he says.

One incentive of the Smart Site program is that equipment is provided for companies as long as certain requirements are met. This program

also offers a unique opportunity to network with other companies participating in the program, which gives businesses access to other areas of expertise that might not normally be available to them.

Among the successful Smart Site companies located in Central Utah is The Illusion Academy in Mount Pleasant, which has created animations for Disney and Pixar. In addition to cartooning, the company offers illustrations and design for books, brochures, advertising and marketing, corporate identity and branding. Other promising Smart Site companies include Nephi-based XDOBS.com, which uses software to track people through their cell phones; Snapshot Multimedia, located in Loa, which provides multimedia services such as Web design, digital photography and printing; and Vision Research and Architects Northwest, both located in Richfield.

#### THE MAIN STREET FEEL

The Governor's Pioneer Communities/Main Street Program is another step in generating growth in the

Central Utah region. This program is designed to help Main Street areas, which have historically been the economic hub of most rural communities, prosper. This program focuses largely on the retail base in the communities involved, but is also heavily committed to historical preservation, economic strategy development and downtown restoration.

Two Central Utah communities, Richfield and Mount Pleasant, have invested in this program, which provides state funding, consulting, counseling, training and strategies. The advantage of the Main Street program shows in the numbers. Communities that are involved in the Main Street program experience annual sales growth of more than 4 percent, while retail sectors not participating in the program rest at 1.9 percent growth, according to the Governor's Office of Economic Development. Economic development and business leaders in Central Utah anticipate that the Pioneer Communities/Main Street program will draw visitors to discover the attractions in Richfield, Mount Pleasant and the

larger Central Utah region.

#### A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

Central Utah is a region poised for a future of greater economic growth, and its communities are planning ahead. Snow College, a two-year institution located in Ephraim, was selected as a pilot center for one of Utah's Business Resource Centers. Because of its heavy focus on agribusiness in Central Utah, Ephraim will host an agribusiness specialist and will be part of a collaboration between Utah State University and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Business development-related events are springing up in other areas of Central Utah as well. For example, Millard County holds a conference entitled "Growing a Business in Millard County," which focuses on instructing local entrepreneurs how to build and nurture new businesses in such categories as home-based micro-businesses, tourism and agriculture.

Central Utah is a place to find a well-educated, inexpensive employee base, a wealth of resources, business incentives and communities actively promoting new business growth. If people look beyond common rural misconceptions, they will begin to hear the roar of economic vitality.

On the surface, this region may appear to be nothing more than a thoroughfare, but if people could stop and see Central Utah while standing still, they would see an area booming with economic activity.

